



BOYS & GIRLS CLUBS
OF GREATER WASHINGTON

PRINCE WILLIAM & MANASSAS REGION

Statement of Testimony

“MS-13 and Counting: Gang Activity in Northern Virginia”

United States House of Representatives

Committee on Government Reform

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Good morning Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee on Government Reform. My name is Elizabeth Guzman and I am the Assistant Area Executive Director of the Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater Washington, Prince William region. Thank you for the opportunity to present my statement of testimony on behalf of the Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater Washington - Prince William County and Manassas region.

In response to the growing problem of gang involvement amongst young people in the Northern Virginia area, the Boys & Girls Clubs have realized the seriousness of this issue and therefore, have started implementation of a Targeted Outreach program as outlined in the attached paperwork. This program has proven to be effective in Boys & Girls Clubs throughout the country, but most importantly, throughout Virginia.

Please take a moment to read in further detail my statement of testimony as presented in the attached report.



BOYS & GIRLS CLUBS
OF GREATER WASHINGTON

PRINCE WILLIAM & MANASSAS REGION

Saving Lives

The Regional Gang Prevention
Initiative of the Boys & Girls Clubs
of Greater Washington – Prince
William & Manassas Region

2006-2007



BOYS & GIRLS CLUBS OF GREATER WASHINGTON

PRINCE WILLIAM & MANASSAS REGION

THE POSITIVE PLACE FOR KIDS

Boys & Girls Clubs' tradition of service to the Prince William County & Manassas youth began in 1968, when the first Boys & Girls Club was established in Woodbridge, Virginia. Since then, the Boys & Girls Clubs Movement in Prince William County and the City of Manassas has grown to serve more than 7,000 youth annually in 3 Clubs, with over 110,000 square feet of program space.

The Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater Washington are a part of the Boys & Girls Clubs of America and the Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater Washington is the largest affiliate of the Boys & Girls Clubs of America worldwide. The Boys & Girls Clubs of America support their affiliates worldwide with assistance in opening new sites and implementing new programs. Without their continued support, many Boys & Girls Club sites worldwide would not be operating today.

As the new millennium begins, Boys & Girls Clubs continue to maximize human and financial resources to reach more young people and communities in need. Many face serious obstacles to achieving productive futures, but all deserve the chance to achieve their full potential as productive, responsible and caring citizens and leaders. The Boys & Girls Clubs' commitment to outreach and quality is based on concern for deserving youth as well as the fact that soon these boys and girls will become the mainstay of our economy. By aiding their development, all of society benefits.

While the youth in Prince William County & Manassas face many difficult challenges, Boys & Girls Clubs continue the tradition of offering proven solutions that work. Clubs have provided thousands of boys and girls with daily, guidance-oriented character development programs, firmly establishing a reputation as "***The Positive Place for Kids***. Boys & Girls Clubs' mission is clear: Build upon this success to reach out and serve more youth. Our communities' futures depend on it.

TARGETED OUTREACH

The Clubs in Prince William County & Manassas will soon utilize the Boys & Girls Clubs of America's **TARGETED OUTREACH** program to combat the spread of gangs by preventing young people from ever getting involved. **TARGETED OUTREACH** is a proven comprehensive approach using effective techniques and strategies that direct "at-risk" young people to positive alternatives offered by Boys & Girls Clubs. Through a referral network linking local Clubs with courts, police, other

juvenile justice agencies, the schools, social service agencies, and community organizations, as well as through direct outreach efforts, young people identified as “at-risk” are recruited and mainstreamed into Club programs as a diversion from gang activity.

The approach acknowledges youth most “at-risk” of gang involvement are not seeking the constructive environment that Clubs have to offer, and the programs offered at Boys & Girls Clubs provide positive, developmental activities for “at-risk” youth. Upon recruitment, targeted youth are mainstreamed into regular Club program activities in a non-stigmatizing way, while case management services and tracking are provided for a full year of participation.

Program Overview

Boys & Girls Clubs in the Prince William County & Manassas region are starting implementation of the first two programs below – DPI and GPTTO (Delinquency Prevention Initiative and Gang Prevention Through Targeted Outreach). For descriptive purposes, all four components of the overall **TARGETED OUTREACH** program are provided. The Prince William County & Manassas region plans to incorporate the full program and each of its components as funding becomes available.

The **TARGETED OUTREACH** approach provides young people with an exciting, fun alternative to the destructiveness of gangs, and the opportunity to be a valuable asset to the community. In these difficult and troubled times, this is a dividend well worth the investment.

Case management is an integral part of the **TARGETED OUTREACH** approach. Proper record keeping and documentation ensure targeted youth receive appropriate services through the Club and referral sources. Monthly, staff documents progress on specific participant goals, such as Club involvement, school performance, referral status, and significant achievements or problems, such as involvement in the juvenile justice system. In addition, the case management information serves as the basis for evaluating the success of the overall program.

Program participants develop skills in getting along with others, teamwork, setting and achieving goals, and leadership. Young people on the right track do not become involved in costly and destructive behavior. They help others, take responsibility for their own actions, and act as role models to younger children.

Once in the Club, the youth is welcomed and mainstreamed into regular Club activities. Club professionals assess their programs and activities to ensure that programs and activities offered are based on needs and interests of targeted youth.

A Club professional takes special interest in each youth in order to orient the youth and help them feel welcome. This technique is used to encourage “bonding” between the staff person and the youth. Bonding is one of the most effective tools the Club has to influence the life of a young person, with the staff person having the potential to become a significant adult in the life of that youth.

Programs offered by the Club include educational activities focusing on personal development. These activities develop communication, problem solving, goal setting, and decision-making skills. They are designed to give young people the sense that they can do something well, and that they are competent and have individual worth.

Health and fitness is also an important part of the Club. Activities such as sports tournaments and health fairs encourage physical development and healthy lifestyles. Through recreational activities, members have fun, and acquire self-confidence and develop skills in interpersonal relationships.

DELINQUENCY PREVENTION INITIATIVE (DPI)

The goals of DELINQUENCY PREVENTION INITIATIVE is to prevent young people between the ages of 6 and 18 from becoming involved in negative, risky behaviors that can result in involvement with the juvenile justice system. The specific objectives include:

1. Mobilize key community leaders to address the gang issue and develop a community response;
2. Identify youth “at risk” of delinquent, criminal behavior;
3. Involve youth in programs that meet identified needs and interests of participants and maintain continued participation in Club programs;
4. Case manage participants’ program involvement, academic performance, family status and juvenile justice involvement

GANG PREVENTION through TARGETED OUTREACH (GPTTO)

Similar to DPI, the goal of GANG PREVENTION THROUGH TARGETED OUTREACH is to prevent young people between the ages of 6 and 20 from becoming involved in gangs. The key difference is that new youth are being recruited to the Club through referral sources in the community. The specific objectives implemented at each site include:

1. Mobilize key community leaders to address the gang issue and develop a community response;
2. Identify and recruit (from referrals from community partners) youth “at-risk” of gang membership and provide them with constructive, positive alternatives;
3. Mainstream participants into Club programs based on interests and needs and maintain continued participation in B&GC programs;
4. Case manage participants’ program involvement, academic performance, family status as well as juvenile justice involvement.

The approach uses two primary ways to aggressively reach out and recruit youth at risk of gang involvement:

- **Direct Outreach** - in which Boys & Girls Club youth development professionals use various techniques to get to know young people outside the Club and encourage them to join the Club;
- **Referrals** - in which community organization or agencies identify youth “at-risk” of gang membership to join the Club.

Once in the Club, the youth is welcomed and mainstreamed into regular Club activities. Club professionals assess their programs and activities to ensure that programs and activities offered are based on needs and interests of targeted youth.

GANG INTERVENTION through TARGETED OUTREACH (GITTO)

The goal of the GANG INTERVENTION through TARGETED OUTREACH approach is to change the behaviors and value systems of gang-involved youth using the local Boys & Girls Club and Club programs to facilitate that change. While the mode is similar to GANG PREVENTION through TARGETED OUTREACH, the GANG INTERVENTION through

TARGETED OUTREACH approach focuses on youth who are **identified** gang members. Selected Clubs focus on outreaching to youth that are actively involved in the gang lifestyle. These youth are referred to the Club. The Club staff then designs a program plan for the youth that meets their interests and needs while focusing on changing the value system of the targeted youth.

The four components of TARGETED OUTREACH (Community Mobilization, Recruitment, Programming and Case Management) are utilized with a heavy emphasis on needs-based treatment plans. Weekly case management of intervention youth program plans is an intricate part of the intervention approach. Two Clubs nationwide will be selected to outreach to thirty-five high-risk youth.

TARGETED RE-ENTRY

Built on the premise that personal development gains experienced by incarcerated youth must be maximized and then maintained in the community upon release for long-term positive change and normalization, the TARGETED RE-ENTRY approach is a unique collaborative that allows Clubs to support the transition of incarcerated youth back to the community.

A continuum of care is provided that starts in the institution and continues in the community. The goals of the program are:

1. To support the current treatment services provided by the institutions that detain youth by establishing the traditional community-based youth development services of the Boys & Girls Club.
2. To establish relationships between the wards in the correctional facilities and the staff of the local Boys & Girls Clubs in their community as part of a re-entry planning process, bridging institutional programming and community services; and
3. To engage local Boys & Girls Clubs as primary service providers in supporting aftercare supervision by providing personal and social development services and assisting in brokering other services for wards upon release to their home community.



BOYS & GIRLS CLUBS OF GREATER WASHINGTON

PRINCE WILLIAM & MANASSAS REGION

Gang Prevention Update **2006 - 2007**

The Targeted Outreach program acknowledges that youth who are most “at-risk” of gang involvement are often not seeking the constructive environment that Clubs have to offer. Participants are most troubled and “at-risk” of negative behaviors. Currently, a total of 893 Virginia youth have been served through the Targeted Outreach curriculum. Each community has customized a program that fits the neighborhood and the needs and interests of recruited youth. Children as young as 7 and youth as old as 20 are case-managed by Club staff. Detailed information about the child’s life, needs and interests are recorded and services are offered to meet them. This program will soon be serving youth most at-risk of gang involvement in Prince William County & Manassas.

BASELINE DATA

Youth experienced a spectrum of risk factors that leave children susceptible to becoming gang-involved. Recruited youth exhibited aggressive behavior and a lack of respect for authority.

- Family problems included violence, physical and emotional abuse, lack of supervision and involvement, parental incarceration and/or involvement in illegal activities including gangs.
- Community surroundings offered no refuge from personal problems. Many youth “hung out” on the streets of their gang infested neighborhoods, coming into contact with negative influences and individuals.
- Peer pressure supported a value system of delinquency. Negative attitudes and behaviors resulted in problems at school, including suspensions and expulsions, and problems with the law.
- Overall, a lack of adult role models was a common denominator. On average, only 46% of targeted youth were involved in any activity that involved at least one supportive adult. Of those, 75% were involved in sports only.

RESULTS

Through involvement with the Boys & Girls Clubs’ Delinquency and Gang Prevention programs, positive outcomes are being seen. Case management information concluded that:

- 55% of youth showed a decrease in aggressive behavior
- 70% of youth now attend the Club regularly (a min of 2 times per week)

In fact, youth average attendance 4 days per week; 69% have maintained attendance after 6 months in the program.

- 38% of youth improved school performance by one or more letter grades.

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

Referrals from schools and direct outreach by staff into the targeted communities are the most prevalent forms of recruitment for participants. In addition, juvenile justice, relatives, churches and public housing are commonly used. Some Clubs also rely on probation and law enforcement to refer at-risk youth.

Boys & Girls Clubs' Targeted Outreach challenges Club staff to connect young people with activities and programs that meet the needs and interests of youth. This means creating and finding programs *beyond* the already full offering of daily Club programs. Clubs have responded to this challenge by creating new partnerships and outreach activities that engage young people. Overall, the success of the program is about the positive relationships and trust that have been built between the targeted youth and the staff. Some examples of adjunct programs through Targeted Outreach include (not offered at all Boys & Girls Club sites):

- Overnight trips for targeted youth, one weekend each month
- Youth are taken to the local shopping mall where a Gang Resource Center has been established. Supportive anti-gang programs are offered at this alternate location.
- Female participants ages 11-14 have been enrolled in a girls only weekly basketball league that teaches life skills.
- Motivational speakers, such as Team Azim and former gang members, were brought into the Club.
- Hands-on workshops with Drums No Guns
- Scared Straight program
- G.E.D classes offered at the Club
- Teen Development Trainings
- Mentoring Programs
- Club/ Community Service empowerment activities
- Boxing program
- Self defense programs
- Summer camps
- Winter ski outings

COMMUNITY MOBILIZATION

Community partnerships are essential to a well-rounded targeted outreach program, not only to seek referrals, but to connect youth with events and activities to fill their time and expand their experiences and cultural awareness.

Each Club organization is active in its community anti-gang coalition(s). In addition, essential relationships have grown, or been formed with, local juvenile

justice/probation offices, parks and recreation, mental health offices, police departments (gang units) and other youth serving organizations.

Building relationships with families of targeted youth has been an important component of the program. Resources that impact the entire family have been positive, such as those with health partners, churches and GED/ESL/tutoring programs.

SUPPORT FROM LAW ENFORCEMENT

The Targeted Outreach curriculum, developed by Boys & Girls Clubs of America, enjoys the support and approval of a variety of law enforcement agencies throughout the communities offering the program. In 2003, the Attorney General's Anti-Gang Task Force recommended that "communities throughout the Commonwealth, that have not already considered the options available through Boys & Girls Clubs of America, invite the Boys & Girls Clubs to make a presentation to the community's leadership about programs available for their area." In March of 2004, the Attorney General, in conjunction with the Boys & Girls Clubs, launched a statewide anti-gang initiative, consistent with the recommendation of the task force.

Police officers also make time to visit Clubs to talk with youth and/or deliver programs such as GREAT and Class Action, both state-approved prevention partnerships between community agencies and law enforcement. Officers and gang coalition investigators have also attended the gang prevention trainings offered by Boys & Girls Clubs.

CASE MANAGEMENT

Case management is the most unique characteristic of the Targeted Outreach approach because it requires staff to go beyond the typical relationship building model of Clubs. Staff members are allotted between 5 and 12 youth to manage.

Case managers develop a personal relationship with their youth and are required to complete monthly tracking forms and assist in mentoring these Club members. Data on youth is collected casually and documented weekly in the participant's file. Staff also make contact with schools and other agencies in the youth's continuum of care to receive updates.

Individual Case Studies - Prevention

Case #1: Lawan had disciplinary problems which carried over to the Club, as well. He constantly cursed and caused disruptions. He never participated in adult-led activities; he only wanted to shoot basketball whether it was time for his age group to be in the gym or not. He had negative feelings towards adults and other teens and tried to incite other Club members to act out.

Club staff began meeting regularly with Lawan, talking with him and discussing the rules of the Club. He was assured that working *with* staff would benefit him greatly. It was not easy. He continued his behaviors - he would not participate in any of the Club activities and learning sessions and was determined to do things "his way."

One day, a trip was planned to see a university basketball game. Lawan was not allowed to attend. He wanted to know why was informed that his actions had prevented him from participating with other Club members. He was told he could start at that very moment and make plans to attend the next planned activity.

Immediately, Lawan made a change. He began attending the Club and participating with other members in daily activities. He was made a committee member that helps plan trips. His mentor makes continual visits to his school to check on him and his behavior. Lawan began to notice that someone cared about his well being. He began completing homework assignments, doing community service and volunteering to help with other things that needed to be done in the Teen Center. Now, he does not miss a day of talking with staff about his day at school. After walking away from a confrontation at school, he was told how proud everyone was of him. Lawan recently volunteered with a community service event to help children twelve and under at a small carnival. He behavior was superb. Lawan is now leading other Club members in positive activities and when he sees someone out of line, he shows leadership to guide younger youth.

Case #2: DeShawn, age 11, is from a single-parent home. His mother and teachers had noticed a change in his behavior; he had become disrespectful and confrontational with others. He had begun to hang around a group of individuals who were associating themselves with a neighborhood gang. His teacher heard of the gang prevention program at the Club and referred DeShawn and his mother. After enrolling in the program, he showed improvement in just six weeks. DeShawn passed his SOLs with the eighty-third percentile. His teachers have commented on his change of attitude since joining the Club.

Case #3: One participant was referred to the prevention program by his school. He came from a single-parent home where his mother worked two jobs. His neighborhood was in gang territory. He was causing trouble in school and had been suspended for fighting on several occasions. He was referred to our Day Report Center Program through which suspended students spend the day at the Club working on school assignments. The Club worked with him to finish his senior year of high school. He graduated and gained employment in the community. He plans to begin college in the fall of 2006. He explored career options while at the Boys & Girls Club and would like to pursue a career in Business Administration.

Individual Case Studies – Intervention

Gang Intervention Through Targeted Outreach (GITTO) is a component of the Targeted Outreach compendium that is not currently implemented in Virginia. However, it is a natural result that in working with youth most at-risk of gang involvement that staff will encounter youth already involved with illegal/gang activities. The following cases illustrate this progression.

Case #1: One member was referred to the Club after being sexed-in to a gang following being suspended from school. The Club encouraged her to continue her education and assisted her in enrolling in a night school GED program. She became volunteer junior staff and was given responsibilities to guide and help other teens remain on track. The Club arranged for transportation to and from

night school and counseled her regarding her outside-Club activities. This member had no parental supervision at home and did not like her home environment. She also wanted to leave the gang lifestyle. The Club helped her move to West Virginia with her new guardian, found the nearest Boys & Girls Club and helped her enroll there. She is currently enrolled at a night school and moving forward with her life.

Case #2: A young man who was suspended from school and charged with gang involvement (beating-in students in the school bathroom) has been receiving “homebound” tutoring at the Club during the daytime non-Club hours (the tutor was uncomfortable working in the child’s home and requested the Club alternative). The young man receives guidance from Club staff, participates in the Club’s First Choice Fitness program and has participated in an Underground Railway Program provided by local college students at the Club. He has bonded with the Teen Center Director, is excelling in his school work, and has become a favorite of the college students who remark on his enthusiastic participation and positive attitude – volunteerism, ability to look adults in the eye, accept compliments, smile. His tutor (a former school principal) credits the Club for the improvement in attitude and academic performance (As and Bs).

Case #3: A 13 year old male was referred to the Club by his mom. She stated that he was coming in late and hanging around older boys. He was enrolled in the GPTTO program and issued a case manager. For the first two weeks he was not receptive to the programs. Through weekly meetings, his case manager found out he was being threatened by his older friends. Two days later he was beaten. He then confessed to Club staff that he was a member of the Crips. He stated that the gang members said the only way out is to die. He wanted his life back. The Club brought the matter to the police and got his school changed. The youth is now attending both school and the Club regularly.

FUNDING

Every Club can use more case managers to increase the quality of the program and ease the responsibilities of current staff. Overwhelmingly, Clubs seek financial assistance to cover more case managers. With more staff, duties of case managers can expand services such as more home visits. Whether full or part-time, staff must find time to go to the schools to follow-up with the participants’ teachers and collect data. Each staff member spends time meeting with program partners and documenting youth progress.

With transportation costs on the rise, the ability to bring youth on more out of town trips is limited. However, this is precisely the type of activity that is popular with youth and helps recruit them to the Clubs.

To date, a total of \$50,000 federal pass-through funds has been directed to this initiative by the Attorney General’s Office. These funds were a part of federal gang prevention funding obtained by U.S. Congressman Frank Wolf. All other funds used to operate gang prevention programs at Clubs have been raised locally or have been provided by Boys & Girls Clubs of America.

In 2005, the annual cost to DJJ to support one incarcerated youth was \$88,271. The cost to serve a child through the Boys & Girls Clubs, just \$1,000. By keeping 893 high risk youth out of the juvenile justice system, the Boys & Girls Clubs helped save Virginia \$56,493,440.

An investment is needed now to continue and expand gang prevention operations throughout Prince William County and Manassas. This is the only next generation our community has. Furthermore, this is an investment that cannot afford to be overlooked. In the end, the payback will be ten fold.